

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EB-07 OES-06 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 ORM-02 /092 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:RFOBER, JR.:SLB

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHETON, JR

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R 190048Z SEP 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 231891

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BD, PORG

SUBJECT: INDIAN DCM DISCUSSES FARAKKA AND OTHER
MATTERS WITH NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: INDIAN EMBASSY DCM VENKATESWARAN CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON SEPTEMBER 15 TO SEEK U.S. SUPPORT FOR INDIA'S CONTENTION THAT FARAKKA SHOULD NOT BE INSCRIBED ON THE UNGA AGENDA AND TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE HANDLING OF THE JETHMALANI ASYLUM CASE. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY REPLIED BY EXPLAINING LONGSTANDING U.S. POLICY ON BOTH THE INSCRIPTION OF AGENDA ITEMS AND POLITICAL ASYLUM. THE CANDIDACY OF DR. GOPAL FOR UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH'S ARRIVAL PLANS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. END SUMMARY.

2. INDIAN EMBASSY DCM VENKATESWARAN ACCOMPANIED BY FIRST SECRETARY RAJAN CALLED ON NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON SEPTEMBER 15 TO DISCUSS THE FARAKKA DISPUTE AMONG OTHER
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MATTERS. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS AND NEA/INS

OFFICER OBER SAT IN. ON FARAKKA VENKATESWARAN REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING THE FAILURE OF BILATERAL TALKS IN DELHI, AND HANDED OVER AN EIGHT-PAGE STATEMENT DESCRIBING THE INDIAN POSITION (SEPTTEL). HE SAID INDIA OPPOSED THE INSCRIPTION OF THE FARAKKA ITEM ON THE UNGA

AGENDA UNDER ARTICLE 14 OR IN ANY OTHER FORM, AND WANTED U.S. SUPPORT IN THIS REGARD. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON EXPLAINED THE UNITED STATES TRADITIONALLY SUPPORTS THE RIGHT OF MEMBER STATES TO INSCRIBE ITEMS OF CONCERN ON THE UNGA AGENDA, AND WOULD MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT POSITION WITH REGARD TO FARAKKA. AT THE SAME TIME, WE RECOGNIZE FARAKKA RAISES COMPLEX TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, AND WE WILL BE RESERVING OUR POSITION ON THE MERITS OF THE ISSUE.

3. VENKATESWARAN SAID HE WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO SAY THE GOI DEPLORES THE RECENT GRANT OF POLITICAL ASYLUM TO JETHMALANI. MOREOVER, THE GOI WAS DISTURBED AT THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICER THAT JETHMALANI HAD STATED A "CREDIBLE CASE" FOR ASYLUM. ACCORDING TO THE DCM, DELHI HAS BEEN APPRECIATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S RESTRAINT SO FAR ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA BUT FEELS THE HANDLING OF THE JETHMALANI CASE IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH EFFORTS AT ACHIEVING A MORE MATURE, CONSTRUCTIVE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY POINTED OUT THE JETHMALANI CASE WAS IN FACT HANDLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH WELL-ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES, AND ASYLUM STATUS WAS GRANTED ONLY AFTER A CAREFUL REVIEW OF ALL THE FACTS. ONCE JETHMALANI MADE APPLICATION FOR ASYLUM, OUR REGULATIONS REQUIRED US TO PROCESS APPLICATION AND APPROVE IT IF WE FOUND HE HAD CREDIBLE CASE, WHICH FRANKLY HAD BEEN OUR CONCLUSION BASED ON CONSEQUENCES WE BELIEVED WOULD FACE HIM IF HE RETURNED TO INDIA. THIS CASE HAD IN FACT ATTRACTED LITTLE PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE COMPARED WITH THE PUBLICITY THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN HAD WE DENIED ASYLUM. THE DEPARTMENT MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE CASE BUT RESPONDED TO LEGITIMATE PRESS INQUIRIES IN AS LOW-KEY A MANNER AS POSSIBLE. IN RESPONDING, VENKATESWARAN ALLUDED TO THE RESUMPTION OF THE FRASER HEARINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA SEPTEMBER 16, AND SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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HE HOPED FUTURE CASES SIMILAR TO THAT OF JETHMALANI WOULD NOT COME IN THE WAY OF IMPROVING INDO-U.S. RELATIONS.

4. DURING THE MEETING VENKATESWARAN HANDED OVER AN AIDE-MEMOIRE ASKING THE U.S. TO SUPPORT THE CANDIDACY OF DR. SARVAPALLI GOPAL FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY COMMENTED THAT DR. GOPAL IS FAVORABLY KNOWN TO US AND HIS CANDIDACY WILL BE

GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BUT THE U.S. GENERALLY TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE VIEWS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL GROUP TO WHICH INDIA BELONGS. VENKATESWARAN WAS UNABLE TO SAY WHETHER DR. GOPAL HAS THE SUPPORT OF THESE MEMBERS. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TOOK THE OCCASION TO SAY WE WOULD

BE GRATEFUL IF THE GOI JOINED US IN SUPPORTING THE REQUEST OF ISRAEL TO BE ASSIGNED TO THE EUROPEAN REGION OF UNESCO. VENKATESWARAN ASSURED HIM THAT INDIA IS A MODERATE ON ISRAELI QUESTIONS AND PROMISED TO CONVEY THE REQUEST TO DELHI.

5. VENKATESWARAN CONFIRMED THAT AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH IS PLANNING TO ARRIVE THE SECOND WEEK OF OCTOBER (NEW DELHI 13569) AND EXPRESSED HOPE THE CREDENTIALS CEREMONY CAN BE SCHEDULED SHORTLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL. MR. ATHERTON INDICATED WE WOULD DO WHAT WE COULD DESPITE THE ALREADY CROWDED PRE-ELECTION SCHEDULE.
ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LOBBYING, MEETING AGENDA, POLITICAL ASYLUM, AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FARAKKA BARRAGE, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE231891
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RFOBER, JR.:SLB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760354-0176
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760944/aaaabloy.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <11 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN DCM DISCUSSES FARAKKA AND OTHER MATTERS WITH NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, PBOR, IN, BG, US, UNGA, UNESCO, (SINGH, KEWAL), (GOPAL, SARVAPALLI)
To: NEW DELHI
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006